

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 2171

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT CARTER'S TRIP: PRESIDENT PEREZ SUGGESTS
INAUGURATING SELA MINISTERIAL MEETING

1. PRESIDENT SUMMONED ME TO HIS OFFICE TO SUGGEST THAT
PRESIDENT CARTER CONSIDER BRIEFLY ADDRESSING AND INAUGURATING
THE SELA (LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM) MINISTERIAL
MEETING DURING HIS VISIT TO CARACAS. PEREZ EXPLAINED THAT
THE SELA MEETING IS SCHEDULED TO CONVENE IN CARACAS MARCH 30,
BUT HE WOULD SEEK TO ADVANCE IT BY TWO DAYS IF PRESIDENT
CARTER WAS AGREEABLE. PEREZ EXPLAINED THAT THIS WOULD BE A
REAL COUP, IN HIS OPINION, FOR PRESIDENT CARTER AND WOULD
THEREBY DEMONSTRATE US RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT OF LATIN
AMERICAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. IT WOULD GIVE THE PRESIDENT
THE CHANCE TO SPEAK TO CABINET-LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL
LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. HE RECALLED THAT THE TWO
PRESIDENTS HAD DISCUSSED SELA LAST JUNE. HE STRONGLY
URGED THAT THE PRESIDENT AGREE TO DO THIS. (COMMENT:
SELA WAS FORMED IN 1974 AT VENEZUELA'S AND MEXICO'S INITIATIVE
TO SERVE AS A FORUM FOR COORDINATING LA POSITIONS AND POLICIES
ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC/DEVELOPMENT MATTERS. ALL LATIN AMERICAN
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AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING CUBA, ARE MEMBERS.)

2. PEREZ EMPHASIZED THAT HE DOES NOT RPT NOT SUGGEST THIS
AS A REPLACEMENT FOR THE SPEECH BEFORE CONGRESS. THE CONGRESSIONAL
APPEARANCE IS SET AND EXPECTED, AND TO FOREGO
IT, THE PRESIDENT SAID, WOULD BE A REBUFF AND A MISTAKE.
WHAT HE HAD IN MIND, PEREZ SAID, IS POSSIBLY BRIEF REMARKS

IN A 15-TO20- MINUTE APPEARANCE TO INAUGURATE THE SELA MEETING.

3. AS IS BEING REPORTED IN SEPTEL, THE PRESIDENT AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAVE, IN ANY CASE, SUGGESTED THE SHIFTING OF THE SPEECH BEFORE CONGRESS TO THE SECOND DAY IN LIEU OF THE SECOND BILATERAL AND EXPANDING THE FIRST BILATERAL SOMEWHAT, THE PURPOSE BEING TO LIGHTEN THE FIRST AFTERNOON'S SCHEDULE. THERE IS THUS SOME ROOM THE AFTERNOON OF THE FIRST DAY. IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SELA MEETING, THE PRESIDENT SAID, PRESIDENT CARTER MIGHT WISH TO CONSIDER ARRIVING HALF AN HOUR EARLIER, WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE INSERTION OF THE SELA EVENT (AN EXCELLENT MEDIA EVENT, INCIDENTALLY) WITHOUT STRAIN.

4. PRESIDENT PEREZ ASKED TO BE INFORMED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF PRESIDENT CARTER IS WILLING TO MEET WITH SELA SINCE, IF SO, HE MUST MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO ADVANCE THE MEETING FROM MARCH 30 TO MARCH 28. PLEASE ADVISE.
VAKY

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